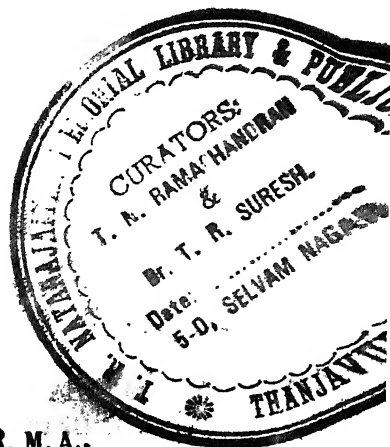
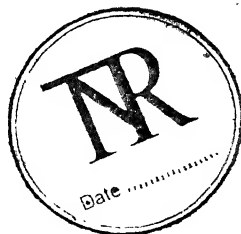




**A Concise History
of
CLASSICAL SANSKRIT LITERATURE**



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PREFACE

The true history of a nation is the history of its literature. Accounts of battles won or lost, of kingdoms annexed or surrendered, and of cities built or destroyed constitute the chronicles of dynasties, not the history of the people. The hopes and despairs, the aspirations and achievements, the culture and arts of a nation are truly and perennially reflected in the magic mirror of literature. The poets are, therefore, not only "the unacknowledged legislators of the world," but also the unchallenged and infallible historians of it. The statement is true to a greater extent with respect to countries whose culture and civilization, on account of their hoary antiquity, challenge and evade the feeble peeps of the historian. Therefore an intimate acquaintance with Sanskrit literature, its contents, and its spirit is of paramount importance not only to the student of Sanskrit but also to the historian, the sociologist, the politician and the administrator who desire to appraise correctly the national individuality of India.

The scope of this little book, however, is not to quench but only to rouse the thirst for such knowledge. The treatment of the subject attempted in this book is neither comprehensive in its width nor profound in its depth; yet the major branches of classical Sanskrit literature have been covered in outline here, dealing at some length with the more important authors and referring briefly to many others. The Vedic and the technical or *Sastraic* literatures have not been included in the scope of this work. Most of the books on the History of Sanskrit literature, deal with the authors who lived upto the 13th or 14th century A.D., but this book takes the readers up to the 18th century. Almost the entire bulk of the contribution to Sanskrit literature during the period from the 12th to the 18th century A.D., has been made by South India, a fact which proves effectively that it is a misnomer to call Sanskrit 'The language of the North.' This contribution has been more or less ignored in many books and dispensed with as insignificant in some others. It has been my endeavour to include in this book brief references to the eminent authors of the South who have enriched Sanskrit by their valuable contributions.

Though this book is mainly intended for the use of the University students preparing for the Degree Examinations, care has been taken to make it useful

and interesting to the general readers who wish to acquaint themselves with the treasures of Sanskrit literature.

The appendices at the end are calculated to help the reader to derive the maximum benefit by the study of this book. Appendix A gives the Sanskrit verses which have been cited in the course of this volume. Appendix B consists of an alphabetical list which invariably includes the names of all authors and works dealt with, briefly or at length, in the course of this book, but omits generally those that are only casually referred to. Appendix C is designed to give the student a bird's eye view of the whole range of Classical Sanskrit Literature. It gives a century-wise and subject-wise chart of authors and works covered by the book so that, by a mere glance at it, one can get a complete picture of the history of any particular branch of literature through all centuries or of the contributions to all branches of literature in a particular century. The chart is sufficiently comprehensive, leaving out only very minor names and is based on the views most commonly accepted regarding the age of the poets. The alternative periods suggested are put within brackets and doubts about authenticity of authorship are indicated by an interrogation mark. Historical Kavyas have not been assigned to a separate

column but are included under Court-epic, Prose or Champu as the case may be and are marked with the letter (H).

Owing to some practical difficulties in printing it has not been possible to use diacritical marks for Sanskrit words in Roman script, and the Sanskrit verses cited in the course of the book are given in a separate index in the end.

I wish to mention here with gratitude that, in the preparation of this work, I have been considerably benefitted by my careful study of the works on the History of Sanskrit literature written by earlier authors, especially A. A. Macdonell, A. B. Keith, Winternitz, Dr. M. Krishnamacharya, Dr. P. S. Subramanya Sastriar and Dr. V. Varadachariar.

This edition is essentially a reprint of the revised edition of 1963 but for some significant verbal changes and some occasional rearrangement of the topics on a more logical basis. The Ramayana, for instance is dealt with earlier than the Mahabharata and the Itihasas and Puranas are brought under the same chapter entitled "Epics".

Suggestions from friendly critics for the improvement of the book in future editions will be received with due respect and gratitude.

KUMBAKONAM, }
1-10-1965. }

V. Gopala Iyengar.

A Concise History of Classical Sanskrit Literature

CHAPTER I

Introductory

IT is an arduous and almost impossible task to fix with any precision the exact date or even the approximate period of most of the Sanskrit authors. The almost absolute absence of the historical spirit among the ancient writers of India, their extraordinary fascination for the supernatural element, the indifference of many great minds to things terrestrial, the firm belief in the eternity or divine origin of some works like the Vedas, the vastness of the period covered and the variety of subjects dealt with and several other similar causes have made the task of the student of research who attempts to study the origin, progress and development of the several branches of Sanskrit literature almost impossible; but the steady and continuous progress of research by scholars of the east and the west has thrown some light on the difficult subject, though many of the conclusions arrived at are only provisional and tentative.

Some important landmarks in the history of India will be of immense use to a student of Indian literature in fixing the evidence of dates.

Earlier Period:

- Death of Gautama Buddha—480 B. C.
- Alexander's invasion—326 B. C.
- Asoka's reign—269 to 232 B. C.
- Megasthenes's visit to India—302 B. C.
- Chandragupta Maurya's reign—322 to 298 B. C.

Later Period:

- Fahien's voyage—399 to 414 A. D.
- Hsien Tsang's voyage—630 to 645 A. D.
- Travels of I-tsing—671 to 695 A. D.
- Alberuni's voyage—1030 A. D.

The other evidences that we have consist of copper plates, inscriptions on rocks, pillars etc.

Internal Evidence. Besides the above external evidences we have several means of internal evidences to fix the approximate periods of poets. From the Vedic to the Classical age, Sanskrit has undergone several philological changes. The style of the ancient works is more simple and spontaneous while that of the later works abounds in puns, conceits and long compounds. Valmiki, Kalidasa and Sri Harsha of Naishadha may be considered as representatives of the early, medieval and later periods. Rhetorical ornaments are more and more copious and complex and the rules of Poetics and Grammar more and more rigidly observed as time advances. Metrical varieties are more numerous in later ages than in the earlier ones. The state of religion and society described in the books

occasionally points to certain stages in the history of the nation. Certain philosophical tenets are expressed or alluded to in some works. Works of Alankara frequently quote illustrative verses and thereby help us to fix the comparative periods of the poems and the Alankara works.

Whereas we get both external and internal evidences with reference to Classical age, we have to rely purely on internal evidence for the Vedic age; because in the earliest stages, Indian culture and civilization grew almost in a state of isolation from the rest of the world.

The Vedic Literature

Sanskrit Literature can be broadly divided into two main divisions namely the Vedic and the Classical. The Vedic literature, according to Macdonell, covers a period from 1500 B. C. to 200 B. C. and the post-vedic or classical literature covers all the subsequent periods. The beginning of the Vedic age is taken by some scholars as far back as 3000 B. C.. and by others to a much earlier age. In the former half of the Vedic period, the character of the literature was creative and poetical. The centre of culture was the Indus Valley, the modern Punjab. In the latter half, Vedic literature is theologically speculative in matter and prosaic in form, with the centre of culture laid in and around the Ganges Valley.

The Vedic literature comprises the four Vedas, Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda and Atharvaveda, each

consisting of the respective *Samhita* which is a collection of original hymns or *mantras* addressed to the gods, the *Brahmana* portion which treats of ceremonial applications of the hymns, the *Aranyakas*, introducing a spirit of philosophical speculation and the *Upanishads* which formulate regular theses on metaphysics and philosophy. We have, besides these, several works called *Sutras* pertaining to each Veda, setting forth the detailed directions and the rules for the performance of the several rituals with the use of the Vedic hymns.

The *Srauta Sutras* explain the performances of Vedic sacrifices, the *Grihya Sutras* set forth the rules for domestic rituals like marriage etc., and the *Dharma Sutras* expound codes of morality, ethics and statecraft. These Sutras, though they do not constitute part of Vedic literature itself, are a necessary adjunct to it and can be taken as representing the close of the Vedic period and as marking the transition between the Vedic and the Classical ages.

The Vedic and the Classical Literature

The Vedic and the Classical literatures essentially differ from each other in point of matter, spirit and form. The matter of the Vedic literature is completely religious in the strictest sense of the term, being composed of prayers and hymns addressed to deities invoked in sacrifices, ceremonial treatises and metaphysical speculations. The classical Sanskrit literature which developed in every branch and comprehends

national and court epics, lyric, drama, romance. fairy-tale, fable and didactic literature, is secular in its subject-matter. The Vedic deities like Indra, Agni and Varuna have sunk into oblivion and are subordinate to Brahma, Vishnu and Siva in the classical literature. The spirit of the Vedic literature is optimistic, but that of the classical is pessimistic. In the Vedic literature man appears as a strong and powerful agent capable of acquiring all amenities of life and prays to the gods for happiness both here and in the next world. In classical literature, man is a tool in the hands of a relentless Fate and the pleasures of the world are stigmatised as contributing to miserable bondage from which an aspirant after real joy must flee away. This is due to the absence of the doctrines of Karma and reincarnation in the Vedic period and their active presence in the later ages. In the Vedic literature man is always the exhorting and extolling petitioner and the gods are always the benign granters of their prayers; but in the classical literature mortal and immortal characters are mixed up with an unrealistic exaggeration. There are differences even in form. The Vedic literature has a great proportion of prose in it. All the *Brahmanas* and almost the whole of the *Samhita* of Yajurveda are written in prose whereas prose is conspicuously meagre in the classical literature and is confined to commentary especially on Philosophy and Grammar. The metres of the Vedic literature are different in structure from those of the classical ages. The Vedic metres are less rigid and less varied. The

style is simple and spontaneous in the Vedic works whereas it is more artificial in the classical Sanskrit. With rare exceptions, long-drawn compounds, high-flown conceits, puns, obscurity of diction and all kinds of artificiality and exaggeration may be said to increase directly with the advance of time.

Classical Sanskrit can be said to begin with the epics. The rules of Grammar for the classical Sanskrit are laid down by Panini who first calls it *Sanskrit*. He divides the language into two classes, *Veda* and *Bhasha*. The *Bhasha* or the refined language is what corresponds to the term "Classical Sanskrit." The classical Sanskrit, though for the first time used in the epics, must have existed long before the date of the epics and ought to have developed side by side with the last phase of the Vedic period.

CHAPTER II

The Epics : Itihasa and Purana

General

The origin of the Sanskrit epics can be traced to the Vedic hymns. The dialogue hymns of the Rig-Veda, the *Akhyanas* found in the Brahmanas and the long recitals during sacrifices must have provided the materials and the model for the epics. The dialogues between Pururavas and Urvashi, Yama and Yami, narratives like the episode of Sunahsepa and several similar myths and legends found in the Vedic rituals contain both the dramatic as well as the narrative

elements in them. It is highly probable that the former inspired the dramatic art and the latter, the epic literature. The later Vedas frequently refer to *Itihasa*, as the fifth Veda and these references must relate to the collections of ancient legends which were then in vogue and which must have formed the originals for some of the epics.

The Sanskrit epics fall into two main classes, the one comprising old stories and legends known as *Itihasa* and *Purana* and the other comprising poems known as *Kavyas* or Ornate Epics. The Mahabharata is the oldest work of the former class and the Ramayana of the latter, although both the Ramayana and the Mahabharata are generally classed as *Itihasa*. Mahabharata has exercised a great influence on the later Puranas and the Ramayana has served as a model for later court epics of the post-puranic age.

Though both these great epics are composed in the *anushtubh* metre, there are radical points of difference between the two. The Ramanaya is a sustained and coherent narrative of a single story, whereas the Mahabharata is composed of a jumble of too many different legends besides the main story, The Mahabharata is not homogeneous in style, spirit or matter and is therefore not the work of single hand or of a single age. It contains many archaic verses and tales in prose. Long speeches and narratives in verse are introduced in the name of the speakers (as *Lomaharshana uvacha* etc.) and these must be fragments of some

ancient stories. Mahabharata is so overgrown that it is more an encyclopaedia than a single work. The Ramayana, on the other hand, is mostly uniform in matter and style and is the work of a single author. It has not a single line in prose or in archaic metres. The Ramayana was composed in the eastern part of India and the Mahabharata in the western part.

The Ramayana

The Ramayana, popularly called the *Adi Kavya*, consists, in its present form, of about 24,000 slokas which are divided into seven books called *Kandas*. Orthodox opinion is that all the 24,000 slokas are original as the number is stated by the poet himself and as the verses are graduated at intervals of 1000 verses with a verse beginning with the respective letter of the Gayatri hymn in order. As under such regulated conditions any interpolation would be particularly difficult, the present text must mostly be original according to some. But the reference to this graduation by the letters of Gayatri and the reference to the number of verses are themselves not quite authentic.

Development of the Ramayana: Professor Jacobi has shown that the original Ramayana ought to have contained only five books ending with the present sixth book. Book I and VII (the Bala and the Uttara Kandas) must have come in as later extensions. The following reasons are adduced in support of this view:-

1. The logical conclusion of the plot is found in the coronation of Rama, so that even a superficial reader feels the story complete at this stage. Even to this day recitations and expositions of the Ramayana stop at this point. Book VII is not a cogent continuation of the plot; but it mostly consists of biographical notes on the characters involved in the regular plot. Thus it appears as a supplement or appendix mixed up with a slight narrative thread. Many later adaptations and stories based on the epic like Bhoja Champu and many renderings into other languages generally stop with the coronation of Rama.

2. There are two accounts of the contents of the epic in cantos 1 and 3 of Book I which are different from each other. One of these does not mention anything about the stories of the Bala Kanda and the Uttara Kanda, while the other takes them into consideration. It is therefore evident that the two accounts of the contents most probably represent two different stages of the Ramayana.

3. There are statements in the Bala Kanda which contradict those in the others. For example, Rama tells Surpanakha in the Aranya Kanda that Lakshmana is not married while the Bala Kanda describes Lakshmana's marriage.

4. Minor narratives and episodes are not quite consistent with the spirit of the book and these are found only in book I and book VII, for example—Gangavatarana, birth of Skanda etc.

5. Clear mention of Rama as an incarnation of Vishnu is found in those books whereas no such explicit statement is found in the body of the main epic.

6. The beginning of book I explains how Valmiki happened to compose the poem. As in this part and in some parts of book VII, Valmiki himself appears as a character, he could not have composed them. The last book contains stories about Kusa and Lava, their birth onwards to their reign. At the same time it is stated that Valmiki lived on the banks of the Ganges close to Ayodhya and taught Ramayana to the twin sons of Rama as they were very young lads, when they were still living in Valmiki's hermitage. The twins not knowing their parentage sang it in the presence of Rama at his court. Hence it is evident that when Ramayana was first composed and taught by Valmiki and sung for the first time, books I and VII could not have found a place there; for in book I the story of Valmiki occurs and in book VII the story of Kusa and Lava is narrated.

On these grounds we can assume that the whole of the last book and much of what constitutes the I book were added later on. Canto V of Bala Kanda begins with a verse which says that long ago this entire world was ruled over by the kings of the Ikshvaku race. (Vide Appendix A-1) This evidently is the beginning of the work which has been torn off from the context and, with some materials added before and after, formed into a separate book. Some of the junctures are still easily recognizable.

In all probability, in the beginning, the Ramayana was a tribal epic celebrating the victorious career of a tribal hero, but later, in order to raise him to the dignity of a national hero first and then to the status of God, additions have been made to make it clear that Rama was an incarnation of God. Besides this, stray verses have been introduced time after time, but these additions are quite unimportant.

7. Some cantos have been occasionally interpolated and since they are quite consistent with the spirit of the original, they must have been introduced by professional bards for satisfying the popular tastes. In some cases the additions have been so loosely made that they are easily recognizable.

We understand from the Ramayana itself that Valmiki was a contemporary of Rama and that he lived on the banks of the Ganges. He must have been very closely acquainted with the history of Rama and his ancestors. His intimate contact with the court of Rama is clearly brought out by the fact that the banished Sita takes refuge in his hermitage and the twin sons of Rama are brought up by him. This close acquaintance with the court of Rama gave him opportunities to know the details of his life and the several songs and epic tales about him current in Kosala and he composed them into a poem to be sung by bards and professional minstrels. This is the significance of the terms Kuşa and Lava denoting the lads to whom he

taught it. *Kusalava* bears etymological relation to *Kusilava*, 'bards and wandering minstrels', *Kusa* and *Lava* are supposed to have performed the same function as these *Kusilavas*. As the poem grew very popular, interpolations were made purely for professional needs unlike the interpolations of the *Mahabharata*. But the addition of books I and VII could not have been made till the lapse of several centuries; for, the author is supposed to have been a contemporary of *Rama* in the genuine parts of the epic and is mentioned as an ancient sage in books I and VII.

Date of the Ramayana

Priority to the Mahabharata: While the *Mahabharata* reproduces the story of the *Ramayana*, the latter makes no mention at all of the former. Some verses of the *Ramayana* occur verbatim and others in a modified form in the *Bharata* (Vide Appendix A-2). Thus we are sure that the *Ramayana* must have been famous before the other epic took definite shape.

Buddhistic Reference: In the *Jataka* stories of *Pali* literature belonging to the early Buddhists, some parts of the *Ramayana* with some changes occur under the title '*Dasarata Jataka*,' but there the story ends with the wedding of *Rama*. But in *Ramayana* we have only one verse referring to Buddhism and that is clearly an interpolation. Therefore *Ramayana* is Pre-Buddhistic. Weber thinks wrongly that *Ramayana* is based on Buddhistic *Rama* stories and that the characterisation of *Rama* bears Buddhistic influence,

Political Reference: History shows that Pataliputra (Patna) was founded in 300 B.C. by king Kalasoka and was the capital of India at the time of Megasthenes. In canto 35 of book I of the Ramayana, Rama passes through the very spot and no mention is made of the place, while cities like Kausambi, Kanyakubja and Kampilya are mentioned. So it must have been written before the founding of Pataliputra.

The capital of Kosala is mentioned as Ayodhya in the Ramayana, but it is mentioned in Buddhistic and Jain literature, by the Greeks and by Patanjali as Saketa and not as Ayodhya. Later literature adopts both the names. But the word Saketa is not mentioned in the Ramayana at all. The last book mentions Sravasti as the capital of Kusa and the city is not mentioned in the other books. We understand that in Buddha's time King Prasenajit, King of Kosala, ruled at Sravasti. So we conclude that the capital of Kosala was shifted to Sravasti and Ayodhya was renamed as Saketa some time before the date of Buddha (480 B.C.) and that the original parts of the Ramayana must have been composed long before this date. Mithila and Visala are spoken of in the Ramayana as twin cities under different rulers; but in Buddha's time they were already united under the name of Vaisali.

The condition of the state depicted in the Ramayana is of the patriarchal type. There is no complex system of the state as we find in Mahabharata

and rules over the world. About the 12th century B.C. these complex states have begun to exist.

Some scholars, including Professor Weber have held that Ramayana bears clear signs of Greek influence, that the story of the abduction of Sita and the expedition on Lanka for her recovery must have been based on the rape of Helen and the Trojan war, and that the bending of a mighty bow to marry Sita must have been copied from the adventures of Ulysses. There is only a casual correspondence between these stories and the arguments set forth already for the very early date of the Ramayana clearly disprove the possibility of any Greek influence on the original portion of the Ramayana. The Greeks or Yavanas are referred to in the Ramayana twice, once in book I and once in book IV: but Professor Jacobi has shown that they are interpolations. Such passages might have been introduced after about 300 B. C.

Therefore we have to conclude that the original portions of the Ramayana must have been composed clearly before 500 B. C. prior to the reduction of the Mahabharata to a definite form, whereas additions must have been made some time about 200 B. C. and most probably not earlier.

The Theories about the contents of the Ramayana: Scholars of research do not find in the Ramayana an unmixed historical record. The subject matter of the

Ramayana consists of two distinct parts. The earlier part of the story covering the narrative upto Bharata's return to Ayodhya after Dasaratha's death seems to deal with a historical episode and that portion is therefore quite of the nature of a political intrigue for succession to the throne. The interest therefore is quite human. The account of Rama's adventures in the south consists of numerous stories about several demons and other supernatural beings and is therefore to be considered as an allegory. Several scholars have propounded different theories about the probable allegory. Professor Lassen has suggested that the latter portion of the epic is an allegory representing the early attempts of the Aryans to conquer South India. Professor Weber has suggested later that it signifies the spread of Aryan culture to the South particularly to Ceylon. These theories have no basis in the text of the Ramayana. Nothing is mentioned of the South except some hermitages existing there. This would be impossible if a conquest were meant to be allegorized. Secondly the fabulous beings like the monkey chieftains spoken of in the epic might be purely imaginary and need not necessarily be considered as personification or allegorical representation.

Prof. Jacobi holds that the Ramayana is not an allegory but that a Vedic myth is elaborated in the Ramayana. *Sita* as the furrow of the ploughshare, personified as a goddess, occurs in Rigveda. *Sita* in

of the epic.

Rama's fight with Ravana who held up Sita in captivity corresponds to Indra's fight with Vritra and the alliance of Rama with Hanuman, the son of Wind god, is another version of Indra's alliance with Windgod to release the cows that have been imprisoned by Vritra. Thus a regular parallelism has been drawn between the Vedic and the Epic myths by Prof. Jacobi.

The Ramayana is easily the most popular of all the Indian epics. It has influenced the religious life of the Hindus to a greater extent than any other literary work. Countless religious Hindus hold a study of this epic to be an act of piety. Many of the national festivals are based on the story of the Ramayana and many Hindus are named after the characters of the Ramayana. Incessant recitals and expositions of the epic are held even to this day in most of the Hindu towns and villages. On the literary side, the influence of the Ramayana on the succeeding ages has been immeasurable. Valmiki has been adored by all the later poets as the first among poets and as the model for all successors. Kalidasa and numerous other successors owe much of their style, plot and imagery to Valmiki. Many writers of ornate epics and dramas have taken their plots from this source. Raghuvamsa, the Setubandha, Bhattikavya, and Janakiharana among ornate epics, Pratimanataka, Abhishekanatakā,

Mahaviracharita, Uttararamacharita, Anargharaghava, Balaramayana and Prasannaraghava among the dramas, and the Ramayanachampu are the chief among the innumerable Sanskrit works that derive their plots from the Ramayana. In the form of translation and adaptations, it has found its place in all the languages of India. The prophecy about the future of the epic, found in the epic itself, that it will survive so long as the mountain ranges stand and the rivers continue to flow, has been more than fulfilled. (Vide Appendix A-3.)

The Mahabharata : The three stages

The Mahabharata is the earliest example of Itihasa. It is a repository of all ancient legends and bard-songs. In its present form, it contains more than one lakh of verses or two lakhs and forty thousand lines and deals with a great variety of topics. It is divided into 18 books called *Parvas*, sub-divided into minor parts, *Avantara-Parvas*, and contains 2109 chapters with a supplement known as the *Harivamsa*. It is eight times the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* put together. Because of its length, the Mahabharata has been called a literary monster and it is by far the longest poem known to literary history. Even a superficial reader can easily see that it is not a single uniform epic but an encyclopaedic compilation of several compositions belonging to different ages and different authors, written in different styles and evidently with different purposes. These differences lead one to the conclusion that the

arguments :-

1. The subject-matter of this epic can be analysed into the following three classes :-

(a) The main story of the great war between the Kauravas and the Pandavas, forming the epic kernel and the historical back-ground of the book which covers only about 20,000 verses.

(b) Secondary narratives, containing ancient myths and legends like the stories of Sakuntala, Nala, Yayathi, Sibi, Nahusha, Savitri, Rama, Risya-sringa and Matsyopakhyaana, moral fables, parables, stories of the creation and deluge of the world etc.

(c) Didactic and ethical sermons, the exposition of the four *Purusharthas*, the codes of duties of the several castes, the exposition of worldly wisdom and politics, philosophical treatises like the Bhagavad Gita and regular discourses on the different systems of metaphysical thought. These contents have gained for this epic the status of a *Smriti* and the name of *Karsnha Veda*, the Veda of Krishna, another name for Vyasa and of *Panchama Veda*, the fifth Veda.

The whole of the books XII and XIII, the *Santi* and the *Anusasana Parvas*, containing about 14,000 and 11,000 verses respectively have practically nothing to do with the main narrative. They entirely speak of

Bhishma's discourses to Yudhishtira on the duties of kings, the rules of caste, the glory of charity, the path of salvation, the ascetic code etc. In the other books we often see regular treatises on the Sankya, and the Vedanta systems. In Book III the *Vana Parva* we have lectures on worldly wisdom and on morality. We have Vidura Niti in Book V: the *Udyoga Parva*, and philosophical discourses like the Bhavad Gita in the *Bhishma Parva* and so on.

Such, in brief, is the analysis of the triple nature of the substance of the great epic.

2. Book I, the *Adi Parva*, of the Mahabharata contains three statements, each presumably assigning a different number of verses to the epic.

One verse speaks of a stage of the epic when it contained a lakh of verses. This refers to the present condition of the epic. Another verse speaks of a stage when the epic did not contain the secondary narratives and consisted of only 24,000 verses. A third verse speaks of a stage when the epic consisted of only 8800 verses. Ugrasravas speaks of 8800 slokas; Vyasa says he composed 24,000 slokas. Elsewhere it is stated that Vysasa composed one lakh of verses for the gods, fifteen thousands for the Gandharvas, ten thousands for men and so on. (Vide Appendix A-4) It is quite reasonable to presume that these three different numbers refer to three distinct stages in the gradual evolution of the epic.

indicated by three invocatory verses. This also corresponds with the history of the epic. It is said in the book itself that it was first taught by Vyasa to Vaisampayana, that sometimes later Vaisampayana narrated the epic to Janamejaya, and that lastly Suta Pauranika narrated it to the sages assembled at Naimisaranya. These are the three stages through which the epic has developed into its final form.

4. The epic is known by three different names Jaya, Bharata-Samhita and Mahabharata, all the three names being found in the epic itself.

5. Internal evidences based on style and subject, matter also justify this theory of three stages.

The Date of the Mahabharata

The first stage: The original kernel which forms the historical background bears relation to the hymns of the Rig Veda. Bharatas are referred to in the Rig Veda as a warlike tribe. In Vedic literature the tribal wars of Kurus and Panchalas are spoken of frequently. But the Yajur Veda speaks of the union of these two clans. So the historical part of the epic might trace its origin to a date prior to the final formation of Yajurveda i. e., to about the 10th century B. C. Probably these episodes existed in the form of popular songs or ballads handed down by bards which were later on woven into an epic and so no work of this

name could have existed so early as the 10th century B. C. In the Mahabharata we find a prominent place assigned to Brahma. Brahma has a very subordinate place in the Vedic hymns; but the Pali literature of the Buddhists belonging to the 5th and the 4th centuries B. C. indicate for the first time the prominence enjoyed by Brahma. The oldest reference to a work called Bharata or Mahabharata occurs in Asvalayana Grihya Sutra belonging to the 5th century B. C. Therefore we conclude that the disconnected battle songs of the Kurus were first composed in a literary form by one *Vyasa* (arranger) about the 5th century B. C. The present Mahabharata defends the Pandavas as being valorous and virtuous. But there are apparent self contradictions found in the epic itself, namely that most of the Kurus are killed by some cunning means or other, Krishna being the instigator of all this diplomacy. Several portions defending the morality of the Pandavas are feeble, unconvincing and of later origin. Hence critics hold the opinion that, in the original version, the Pandavas were presented in an unfavourable light, aided in their treachery against the Kauravas by Krishna who was not at that stage considered to be an incarnation of God. The victory over Bhishma, Drona, Duryodhana etc. still have an element of unfairness in spite of the defences attempted in later versions. Probably when a change of the ruling dynasty took place, the bards under the new kings made changes to defend the conduct of the new kings of the Pandu dynasty who came into power,

The second stage: Here for the first time the Pandavas are represented in a favourable light. Vishnu is found to have a prominent place and Krishna is proclaimed as an incarnation of Vishnu. We understand from the accounts of Megasthenes in 300 B. C. that the deities, Siva and Vishnu were already prominent in India and that the people were then divided into Vaishnavites and Saivites. The Greeks and Scythians are mentioned as allies of the Kurus and this points to a period after Alexander's invasion and Megasthenes's voyage. Further, Budhistic relics and temples are referred to in the Mahabharata. These point to the conclusion that changes in the epic ought to have been made some time after the death of Buddha and after the invasion of the Greeks. This points to a date between 300 B. C. and the beginning of the Christian era.

The third stage: The popularity of the epics was utilised by the priests for the purpose of didactic instruction and for the spread of the rules of caste, the rules of conduct for kings, the duties of men and women etc. It is at this stage that it got the status of a Dharmasastra and Smriti. Inscriptions of land grants which must be dated between 462 A. D. and 532 A. D. make elaborate mention of the Mahabharata. One of them speaks of it as consisting of more than one lakh of verses by Vyasa. The XII and XIII books

which are very late in date and the Harivamsa which is a supplement ought to have been added by that time, for otherwise it would not make more than a lakh of verses. This reference in the inscription is to the final stage of the epic as we have it now. From 450 A. D. to 500 A. D. we have several land grants which assign lands from royal patrons for the exposition of Dharma through the Mahabharata in the temples. Since at least one century earlier it must have attained this status, we must infer that about 350 A. D. the epic must have attained its present and final form.

Subsequent authors from 600—1100 A. D. make copious references to the Mahabharata, all referring to the final form. Bana and Subandhu of the 7th century A. D. have made use of its legends. Kumarila Bhatta of the 8th century A. D. notices ten out of the eighteen books including XII and XIII and regards it as Dharma Sastra. Sankaracharya born in 788 A. D. clearly refers to this epic and speaks of it as intended to teach morals and philosophy to those who are not entitled to a study of the Vedas. From his commentary it is clear that the Bhagavad Gita was already a portion of the epic in his day. These references are enough to refute the theory of Professor Holtzman that changes in the epic were done, whole books were added and the status of a Smriti was given to it only about 900 A. D. Dahlman tries to prove that Mahabharata was one integral work composed by one poet in pre-Buddhistic times as both an epic and a law-book.

spread round a central fact and inspired by a dominant sentiment to make it a code of Kshatriya conduct. But those views generally do not find support among many scholars of research.

The influence of the Mahabharata upon later literature: Several episodes contained in the Mahabharata have supplied the materials to work upon for several poets of later dates. The episode of Nala and Damayanti has been particularly handled by several poets, the chief poems on the subject being Naishadha, Nalodaya, Nalachampu, Sahridayananda and so on. The story has also found its place in all the spoken languages of the country. The stories of Savitri and Sakuntala have also formed the source of several writers. The greatest Sanskrit dramatist Kalidasa himself has based his Sakuntala on the original story found in this epic. Besides these subordinate narratives, the main story of the Mahabharata itself has been dealt with in parts by writers of ornate epics and dramas. The Venisamhara of Bhattanarayana, the Sisupalavadha of Magha, the Kiratarjuniya of Bharavi and several other works of the kind owe their plots to the great epic. Several dramas of Bhasa, for example, Madhyama Vyayoga, Pancharatra, Dutavakya, Urubhanga etc., are based upon the plot of the Mahabharata. We can say that Bhasa has dramatized almost the whole of the epic in several separate plays.

The ethical parts of the Mahabharata have so decidedly influenced the later philosophers and law-givers that they have conferred on it the name of the Fifth Veda. In several commentaries on the Upanishads, the Brahma Sutras and the like, the Mahabharata is quoted profusely as an authority. Public and private recitations of this epic are common in India even to this day and this testifies to the religious significance of the Mahabharata.

The poetry of the Mahabharata is not uniform in its nature. The Nalopakhyana is written in a very charming and delicate poetic style, while at several other places of the epic nothing but a narrative skill is to be seen. These poetical portions have to a great extent influenced the style of later poets.

Harivamsa

The Harivamsa, though a Purana in itself considering its matter and length, is known as an appendix or supplement, a *Khila* of the Mahabharata. It contains more than 16,000 verses and does not appear like a single work but like a loose jumble of several legends, myths and hymns. Its professed purpose is to glorify Vishnu. The only connection that this book has with the Mahabharata consists in the fact that Vaisampayana, the narrator of the Mahabharata, himself narrates this to the same Janamejaya when the latter requests him to give an account of the race to which Sri Krishna belongs.

The book is divided into three parts. The first book called Harivamsa Parva gives an account of the

of Dhruva, Vena and Viswamitra. It also gives an account of Yadu, Krishna's ancestor, and of the birth of Krishna. It contains, besides these, some hymns addressed to Vishnu. The second book called the Vishnu Parva deals at length with the sports of childhood, and with the later adventures of Krishna, thus giving a full account of *Krishnavatara* and has also several devotional hymns. The third book is called, the Bhavishya Parva; but the name is applicable only to the first canto of it wherein there are prophesies about the future ages. The rest of the third book gives us several unconnected details, including two different accounts of creation and the stories of the incarnations of Vishnu as Narasimha and Vamana. An attempt is made to reconcile the worship of Vishnu and Siva by describing each as singing about the glory of the other. The book narrates some stories of Krishna again, for example the slaying of the demon Poundraka, and concludes with a long account of the fruits and merits accruing from a study of the Harivamsa and the Mahabharata. Among the minor epics Harivamsa is one which still maintains a great popularity.

The Bhagavad Gita

The Bhagavad Gita or the Lord's song is a philosophical poem of about 650 verses divided into 18 chapters believed to be a dialogue between Lord Krishna and Arjuna in the field of battle. When the armies of

both the sides are arranged ready for battle and Arjuna hesitates to fight, being shocked at the thought of slaying his own kinsfolk and preceptors, Lord Krishna expounds to him the great truths of real duty and the knowledge of the self, so as to inspire into him the spirit of selfless service. The poem sets forth elaborately the eternal nature of the soul, the need for the proper performance of one's own Dharma, the value of *Karma* or selfless action, *Jnana* or spiritual knowledge and *Bhakti* or incessant devotion as the means of attaining liberation from the bondage of wordly existence. The doctrine of self surrender, the lesson of detachment from the fruits of one's own action and numerous other similar great principles of Hindu Philosophy are all compressed in the Gita and it has therefore been all along the most popular and adored treatise on Hindu Philosophy. Numberless philosophers like Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva have commented on it. There are translations and commentaries on the Gita in all the Indian and many foreign languages. In short, it is the greatest and most popular work in Indian Philosophical literature.

Though tradition holds the Bhagavad Gita to be a portion of the Bhishma Parva of the Mahabharata, scholars of research have refuted such a view. A long poem of 650 verses dealing with intricate and serious codes of philosophy could not have been spoken out on the field of battle. Originally there might have been a brief dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna, in the place of which the present long poem might have been

followers of the Pancharatra school. Sankara recognizes the Gita, without any doubt, as a portion of the great epic. Bana also speaks of it in the same strain. So the Bhagavad Gita must have been assimilated into the Mahabharata much before Bana's time, namely the 7th century A. D. Professor Telang thinks that the Bhagavad Gita must have been composed earlier than the 3rd century B. C. R. G. Bhandarkar puts it before the 4th century B. C. This early work must have been later on incorporated into the body of the epic by about the 2nd century A. D.

The Puranas

The Puranas, like the Mahabharata, are not homogeneous compositions but are made up of ancient tales and recent additions side by side. Much like the Mahabharata, to which they are greatly indebted both in matter and in spirit, the Puranas derive their source from the common myths and legends that have been popularly current from the Vedic times. These myths and legends must have been originally sung by bards belonging not to the priestly caste but to the class of people called *Sutas*. Hence it is that most of the Puranas are narrated by Suta Pauranika. Later on, finding the works popular, the priestly caste might have utilized them for the purpose of didactic and religious instruction and modified them so as to suit their needs.

The term *Purana* occurs in the Brahmanas and the Upanishads in the sense of cosmogonic enquiries,

myths and ancient tales. In the Mahabharata the word is used to denote ancient legendary lore in general, dealing with the stories of gods and the geneology of sages. In the Upanishads, Purana and Itihasa are called the fifth Veda. The Puranas are spoken of in Smritis as meant for the exposition, (*Upabrhmāna*) of the Vedas. Gautama Dharmasutra, the oldest among the preserved codes of law, speaks of Purana as a class of literature and Apastamba Dharmasutra contains some quotations from 'Purana' which are not to be found in the existing versions of any Purana, though the same idea is found in different words. The Mahabharata refers clearly to the Puranas and recounts several legends from them. There is a verse in the Mahabharata mentioning the 18 Puranas by name, but the verse may be a later interpolation.

On these grounds we infer that the species of literature known as Purana existed from very early times dating even before the Mahabharata; but the Puranas, as we have them now, seem to be of recent origin. The Amarakosa defines the Purana as works dealing with five different topics, namely the main and the secondary creations, the geneology of gods and saints, the epochs of the several Manus and the various dynasties of kings. (Vide Appendix A-5.)

But the Puranas as we have them now devote only a minor attention to these, whereas sectarian matter like the worship of one deity or the other occupies a predominant part. Each Purana is distinctly either Vaishnavite or Saivite and recounts the legends about

ceremonies and ...
particular deity as the only way to salvation. This tendency must have assumed such intensity only long after the 3rd century B. C. Sectarian spirit, the amount of debt that the Puranas owe to the Mahabharata, the frequent references to Buddhism and other religions, the style that indicates a far later development, the highly artificial nature of the stories and the reference to the kings of the later dynasties lead us to the conclusion that the earlier ones among the existant Puranas must have been written after the 1st century A. D. The Vishnu Purana reliably refers to the Maurya dynasty, the Matsya Purana refers to the Andhra dynasty and the Vayu Purana speaks of the Gupta dynasty. Since Bana refers to the Vayu Purana, and since great rulers like Harsha are not mentioned in any of the Puranas, we can take it that the more important Puranas including the Vayu Purana must have come into being before the 7th century A. D., though some like the Bhagavata must have been composed from the 10th century A. D. onwards. Some orientalists say that Puranas as a class were composed after the 10th century A. D. Such opinion is quite against the available facts, set forth above. Further, Kumarila Bhatta of the 8th century A. D. relies on the Puranas as sources of law. Sri Sankaracharya of the 9th century A. D. and Sri Ramanuja of the 12th century A. D. recognise the authority of the Puranas unreservedly. Alberuni in 1030 A. D. shows his familiarity with many of the

Puranas like Aditya, Vayu, Matsya and Vishnu and gives a list of the eighteen Puranas.

To reconcile this conclusion with the frequent references to Puranas in the Mahabharata and the Upanishads, we have to grant that the species of works named Puranas dealing with enquiries into the origin of the universe and such other non-sectarian topics existed long before the date of the Mahabharata, that these were lost, and that the modern Puranas were written later on with a different sectarian purpose, including into the body of the works such fragments of the ancient legends as still existed.

The eighteen Puranas usually enumerated are :
 1. Brahma, 2. Padma, 3. Vishnu, 4. Siva, 5. Linga, 6. Garuda, 7. Narada, 8. Bhagavata, 9. Agni 10. Skanda, 11. Bhavishya. 12. Brahma Vaivarta, 13. Markandeya, 14. Vamana, 15. Varaha, 16. Matsya, 17. Kurma and 18. Brahmanda Puranas (Vide Appendix A-6). Strangely, this list with some variations appears in the Harivamsa, the Vishnu Purana, the Bhagavata and in almost every other Purana as well. Some lists omit one or more of these and substitute others in their place. Vayu Purana finds a place in many such lists instead of the Agni or the Siva Puranas. There are an equal number of Upa-Puranas, the chief among them being, the Narasimha, the Vayu, the Soura, the Vishnudharmottara, the Kalika and the Ganesa Puranas.

These Puranas are usually divided into three groups. The Vishnu, the Bhagavata, the Narada, the

the Brahmanda, the Brahma Vaivarta, the Markandeya, the Bhavishya and the Vamana Puranas which extol Brahma are classified as *Rajasa*. The remaining six, the Siva, the Linga, the Skanda, the Agni or the Vayu, the Matsya, and the Kurma Puranas which expound the glory of Siva are called *Tamasa*.

All the Puranas are ascribed to the common authorship of Vyasa and are introduced as having been narrated by Ugrasravas, the son of Lomaharshana the Suta, to the sages assembled in Naimisaranya. The Vishnu Purana contains a statement that Vyasa wrote the work called Purana Samhita, which was later elaborated into eighteen different Puranas by his disciples. Other Puranas also refer to the fact that there was only one Purana in the beginning out of which the others grew. These factors explain the significance of the common authorship of the Puranas.

The Puranas, as we have them, deal with varied topics. The history of the universe with its creation and deluge, the geographical divisions of the world, the genealogies of kings and the sages and the stories of the incarnations and exploits of one among the Trinity of Gods are the chief contents of all the Puranas. In most cases there are long chapters of a didactic nature, setting forth the rules of caste, the greatness of charity and similar topics. There is also a great deal of sectarian matter, like eulogies about great places of pilgrimage, of fasts and feasts, meta-

physical discussions, prayers and hymns, all composed with the purpose of establishing the superiority of one God to the rest among the Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva.

The Puranas, generally speaking, are not of great value from the point of view of literary art but they have an abiding interest for the student of Indian culture, in tracing the evolution of Indian thought in all its varied spheres, political, social and religious. The conflicting religious creeds and the attempts to unify them, the progress of the Hindu theological concepts, the several metaphysical schools of thought, the geographical and political divisions of the country, the dynasties that ruled over them, the various important cities and places of pilgrimage with their local traditions and, in some cases, even the Hindu concept of literature, music, dance and architecture are all reflected in these Puranas. They have served as source books for most of the poets and dramatists of the latter ages. Law-givers have turned to them as sources of authority, commentators on philosophical and ethical works have found in them a treasury of quotations and historians have found in them a chronicle of pre-historic ages. Many of the Puranas have exercised so profound an influence on the religious life of the respective sects that a study, recitation and exposition of these works are considered upto this day as acts of great piety and devotion. One can say with certainty that the Puranas and the Itihasas constitute the entire cultural history of India.

been expounded by Brahma to Daksha. Besides the usual Puranic contents, it gives an account of the several holy places in the country of Utkala, now called Orissa.

The Padma Purana consists of 55,000 slokas, divided into six sections. The *Srishti khanda* gives a description of the creation and the geneology of kings upto Sri Krishna; the *Bhumi khanda* contains an account of the Earth and its divisions with the glorification of some sacred places like Pushkara; the *Svarga khanda* gives a description of the heavenly regions; the *Patala khanda* has an account of the lower worlds, wherein is introduced the story of Rama and the *Uttarakhanda* sets forth the sacred nature of the several months and the special efficacy of several acts of piety and charity performed in them. There is an account here of the mystic lotus on which Brahma appeared before creation and this explains the title of this Purana. The last section called the *Kriyayogasara* prescribes several fasts, prayers and ceremonies to be observed by devotees of Vishnu. This Purana is specially noteworthy since the stories of Rama and his ancestors and the story of Sakuntala found here are quite in agreement with the versions found in the Raghuvamsa and in the Abhijnana Sakuntala of Kalidasa. This resemblance has led scholars of research to argue that the Padma Purana must have been, in all probability, composed long after the date of Kalidasa using the

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materials found in his works. This Purana refers clearly to the Bhagavata cult and to the Jains and narrates the local traditions of many places. It contains special encomia of the sacred shrines at Srirangam and Venkatadri. It is presumed that it cannot be older than the 12th century A. D.

The Vishnu Purana : This approaches most closely the definition of a Purana, dealing essentially with the five-fold topics set forth in the definition. There is more of unity and less of exaggerated emphasis on sectarian sacrifices and ceremonies in this Purana than what we find in the other Puranas. This fact makes it probable that it is the earliest of Puranas. The whole epic is narrated by the sage Parasara to his disciple Maitreya. In six books called *Amsas* the Vishnu Purana speaks of the stories of the ten Avatars of Vishnu, besides the usual puranic matter. Among the eighteen Puranas this is second only to Bhagavata in popularity and is quoted from, more profusely than any other Purana, by the great religious teachers like Sri Sankara. This Purana gives an account of the Maurya dynasty and therefore might have been composed about the second century B. C.

The Vayu Purana : This is so called as it was narrated by Vayu, the Wind-god. In many lists this Purana is inserted in the place of the Siva Purana. It has great resemblance to parts of the Mahabharata and the Harivamsa. Bana of the 7th century A. D. mentions this Purana with reverence. The Gupta kings of the 4th century A. D. are mentioned in this

somewhere in the 5th or 6th century A. D. In subject matter, this Purana is quite like many others, but it is strongly Saivite in tendency and glorifies the worship of Siva and Saivite rituals.

The Bhagavata Purana : This is the most popular of all the Puranas and has found its way into the literatures of all spoken languages of the country. It seems to be based on the Vishnu Purana for its matter. It is divided into twelve books called *Skandas* and contains about 18,000 verses. It deals at length with the stories of the ten main incarnations and many minor ones of Vishnu and includes many devotional and thrilling hymns.

Kapila and Buddha are spoken of here as incarnations of Vishnu and this denotes an age when the animosity towards Buddhism had completely died out. Book X of the epic dealing elaborately with the story of Krishna is the most popular part of this epic. Radha who is given great prominence in the Krishna stories of Padma Purana finds no place in the Bhagavata. Among all Puranas, the Bhagavata is the most praiseworthy as a literary production in matters of style, metre and descriptive art.

It has been a matter of controversy whether the genuine epic included in the list of eighteen Puranas is the Bhagavata, the Vaishnavite epic or the Devi-Bhagavata, the epic of the worshippers of Devi or

Sakti. The definitely old nature of the composition, the wider popularity, the frequency of translations into other languages, the numerous commentaries by great scholars and philosophers are all in favour of declaring the Vaishnavite epic as the one included among the eighteen Puranas.

Great discussions have been going on concerning the date of the Bhagavata. It has been suspected by several scholars of research to be the composition of the poet and grammarian Bopadeva, son of Hemadri, who lived from 1260 to 1309 A. D. Bopadeva's chief works, the Muktapala, the Harilila and the Anukramanika or the index to the Bhagavata depend on this epic for their subject matter. The similarity between these works and the Bhagavata in style and matter, and the absence of any early reference to this epic and of any quotation from it have led many scholars like Burnouf, Wilson, Colebrooke and Macdonell to conclude that Bopadeva must have been the author of the Bhagavata. Thus they assign the Bhagavata to the 13th century A. D. But this view can no longer be justified. Sri Madhvacharya places the Bhagavata on a level with the Mahabharata and gives profuse quotations from it in his philosophical works. On this ground Bhandarkar assigns it to a period at least two centuries earlier than Madhvacharya. It is reasonable to suppose that it might have been composed in the 10th century A. D. But Sri Ramanuja (1017-1137 A. D.) does not mention the Bhagavata or quote from it in any of his works

universal recognition as a religious epic. Professor Winternitz in recent years has tried to prove that it must be assigned to the 10th century A. D. at the latest. Pargiter and Furquhar place it about the 9th century.

The Agni Purana is so called as it was communicated to Vasishta by Agni, the god of fire. Though the incarnations of Vishnu particularly as Rama and Krishna are dealt with in this Purana, it is essentially Saivite in nature. It deals with the cult of the Linga and Durga elaborately. It further deals at great length with all sorts of motley topics, not included in the scope of a Purana and is almost an encyclopaedia, treating among other things, of medicine, astronomy, architecture, prosody, poetics and dramaturgy.

The Garuda Purana is so called as it was first expounded by Vishnu to Garuda. It resembles the Agni Purana in giving place to all topics of motley interest like medicine; prosody, astronomy etc. It dwells at length on various fasts and ceremonials relating to Vaishnavite faith, although it commends the worship of other gods also like Siva, Parvati, Surya and Ganesa. The specially important portion of this epic is the latter half which speaks at length of the story of the soul after its departure from the human body. It describes the horrors of hell, caused by acts of sin and expounds the significance of the funeral ceremonies conducted for the departed souls by their survivors which are said to accrue to the well-being of the souls in their post-mortem journey.

The Markandeya Purana is one of the most interesting and important and probably one of the oldest among the Puranas. It gives an elaborate account of creation and deluge. It is not sectarian in spirit. The Vedic gods Agni, Surya, Vayu etc., play a prominent part in this epic, which contains many myths especially about the Sun-god. The theology of this Purana has a greater resemblance to the theology of the Vedas than to that of the later ages. Therefore it must be of a more ancient date than many other works of this class. Prof. Winternitz is of the opinion that the genuine portions of this Purana may be assigned to the third century A. D.

Narada Purana: In this the sages Sanaka and others expound to Narada the doctrine of devotion to Vishnu with numerous illustrative legends.

The Bhavishya Purana as the title suggests, aims at giving prophetic accounts of the future ages and contains a great mass of description of religious and propitiatory rituals; especially those advocating the worship of Surya, Agni and the Nagas.

The Brahmapurana derives its name from the theory that the whole creation of the Universe is a 'Vivarta' or transformation of Brahma, the Supreme Being. The *Brahma khanda*, the first section deals with the creation of the world by Brahma; the next section, the *Prakriti khanda*, describes the manifestation, of Prakriti as Durga, Lakshmi, Sarasvati and Radha; the third section, the *Ganesa khanda*, speaks of the legends of Ganesa and the last portion

being laid on the Radha episodes.

The Brahmanda Purana is so called on account of the description of the primeval golden egg which evolved into the Universe later. The Adhyatma Ramayana forms a very significant part of it.

The Linga Purana expounds the glory of Lord Siva in the form of Linga and contains an elaborate account of 28 different incarnations of Siva.

The Skanda purana narrates the story of the birth and exploits of Skanda or Subrahmanya, chiefly the destruction of the demon Taraka. The parts of the Purana dealing with the wedding of Parvati and Siva bear close similarity to the Kumarasambhava of Kalidasa. It is very elaborate in its treatment of the various holy places dedicated to Siva. *Kasi khanda*, a famous portion of this epic, describes the sanctity of Kasi or Varanasi. The epic contains very lengthy theses on Saivite philosophy and metaphysics. The famous Suta Samhita forms an important part of this work.

The Matsya, the Kurma, the Varaha, and the Vamana Puranas describe the exploits of Vishnu during his respective incarnations as a fish, a tortoise, a boar and a dwarf. The contents suggested by the titles occupy only a comparatively minor portion of these epics, while their major portion is devoted to the narration of numerous other legends, to the eulogy of many holy places of pilgrimage and to the glorification of several rituals and religious vows, as is the case with most of the existing Puranas.

CHAPTER III

Court Epics (Kavya)

The origin of the Kavya literature in Sanskrit can be traced to very great antiquity although very few specimens of the earliest stage of Kavyas are left to us. Patanjali in his Mahabhashya refers clearly to the recitations of certain poems and also to the representation of some plays, Kamsavadha and Bali-bandha being among those referred to. Panini, the great grammarian is identified by tradition with Panini, the author of a Mahakavya called Patalavijaya or Jambavatijaya. The topic of the poem is Sri Krishna's conquest over Jambavan in Patala and his marriage with Jambavati, his daughter. Extracts and citations from the poem are available, though the work, as such, has not yet been discovered. Tradition also ascribes to Vararuchi, the composer of the Vartikas or gloss on Panini's sutras, the authorship of many stray stanzas preserved in anthologies and of a poem called Charumati. This shows that the Kavya form existed long before the 2nd century B. C., even though the major works of this class which are now available belong to a period later than the 4th or 5th century A. D. Asvaghosha who is held by many as Kalidasa's predecessor calls his work Buddhacharita a Mahakavya. The fact that a Buddhist poet adopted for the vehicle of his thought a form of literature, the origin of which is undoubtedly due to Hindu culture, makes it necessary to suppose that the form of Mahakavya was sufficiently popular long before

Udayana Katha and also to dramatists like Bhāsa, Saumillaka and Kaviputra. The dramatic form is a further development over the kavya form and therefore Kavyas ought to have existed long before Kalidasa.

The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana which has exercised a very pronounced influence on the erotic and the lyrical literature of Sanskrit, must certainly be assigned to a very early date. Although the present version which has been handed down as the work of Vatsyayana may be of a later date, the work itself in its original form must be older than Kalidasa and Asvaghosha.

Several inscriptions ranging from the 2nd to the 4th century A. D., are all written in verses moulded after the Kavya manner. All these evidences show that the Kavya had attained a fair state of development before Kalidasa. But the greatness of Kalidasa has so eclipsed the names of all others that their works are lost to us. Buddhacharita of Asvaghosha has survived because of its subject matter. It was of interest to the Buddhists themselves to preserve it as it gives the best poetic account of the life of Buddha.

Asvaghosha

By tradition, Asvaghosha is said to have lived as a contemporary of King Kanishka and as there is nothing to contradict it, he must be placed towards the close of the 1st century A. D. We have a Chinese translation of Buddhacharita written between 414 and 421, A.D.

To be so popular as to deserve a foreign translation the work ought to have been in the field at least for a century. So even if the tradition were incorrect, the lowest limit for the date of the work must be fixed somewhere about 300 A. D.

The *Budhacharita*, the *Sundarananda* and the *Sutralankara* are mentioned among his Kavya works. A few shorter poems like *Gandistotrogatha* and a drama known as *Sariputraprakarna* are also said to have been composed by him. Of these the *Buddhacharita* is the most important. *Buddhacharita* is a work in 28 cantos in which Asvaghosha describes elaborately the birth of Buddha, his early life, his renunciation, his successful fight with Mara, the tempter, and the preachings of Buddha. To-day we have only 17 cantos of the genuine work left. This occupies an important place in Sanskrit literature, because of the elaborate ornamentation of poetic art which it contains and which is so much developed in later Kavyas. There are important points of similarity between this poem and Kalidasa's *Raghuvamsa*, not only in the general manner of development but also in style and ideas. So it is held by many critics that Kalidasa was much influenced by Asvaghosha.

Sundarananda seems to have been the earlier work of the poet. In it he has given the story of the conversion by Buddha, of Nanda, Buddha's step-brother. The story in brief is this:— Siddhodhana gives birth to Sarvarthasiddhi and Nanda. Sundari is the most beautiful wife of Nanda. Once, while Nanda is living

of a monk much against his own desire. But Sundari's grief is great, and on coming to know of it, Nanda determines to partake of the worldly pleasures again, setting aside the hermit's garbs and quotes examples from legends in support of his proposal. All Buddha's teachings and warning against this temptation are of no avail. Finally Buddha adopts a different measure to convince his brother of the futility of the worldly joys. He takes Nanda to the Himalayas where the latter sees an ape with only one eye. The ape questions him if his wife is more beautiful than itself. Nanda asserts that she is infinitely more beautiful than the ugly creature. Next Buddha takes him to the land of the *Apsaras*, the divine nymphs. The question is put to him again whether his wife is as beautiful as the divine damsels. He feels that the nymphs are as much more beautiful than his wife, as his wife is than the ape. Thereupon he determines to win the *Apsaras* and comes back to the earth to perform such good deeds and penances as to deserve her. He is reminded that there are things more attractive even than the *Apsaras*. He is told about the fleeting and finite nature of worldly pleasures and about the unlimited bliss that could be got by renunciation. On this, he becomes an avowed monk and carries the torch of Buddhisam to the rest of the world. The *Sutralankara* is mentioned as a work in prose and verse narrating the stories of the *Jatakas* and the *Avadanas* ; but the original has not come down to us and we have only a translation of it.

Buddhaghosha

The story of Buddha, with slight variations from the one which has been narrated by Asvaghosa, is described by the poet Buddhaghosha in his Kavya called *Padya chudamani* in 10 cantos. The language has great simplicity and charm and bears close similarity to the style of Kalidasa and Asvaghosha. He may be assigned to the close of the 4th century A.D. as he is understood to have been sent on a religious mission to Ceylon in the year 387 A.D.

Inscriptions

The only remnants of Pre-Kalidasan poetry besides Asvaghosha are found in the inscriptions written in Kavya style. Most of these deal with *Prasasti* or the eulogies of kings or patrons. Fleet's collection of Indian Inscriptions contain more than 18 inscriptions of importance modelled after the Kavya style and giving a glimpse into the nature of epic poetry in the dark ages, namely the first five centuries of the Christian era. These inscriptions range from 350 to 550 A. D.

Girnar and *Nasik Inscriptions* belong to the very early period of the 2nd century A. D. The *Girnar Inscription* glorifies King Rudradaman and commemorates an event of the year 150 A.D. namely the restoration of the Sudarsana Lake. The *Nasik Inscription* is an eulogy of Pulamayi, the king of Pratisbthana on the banks of the Godavari. The latter one is in Prakrit, while the former is in Sanskrit prose and verse. They use frequently long compounds and many figures of

inscriptions clearly indicate that the Kavya style, as in prose and verse, existed long before that period.

The inscription of Harisena is a panegyric on his royal patron Samudragupta. It contains 9 stanzas in 30 lines and an equal number of prose lines. It shows a clear mastery of the Kavya style and tries to rival the style of Kalidasa. This is engraved on a pillar at Allahabad and must be assigned to a period prior to 350 A.D. The prose portion is full of long compounds whereas the verses are simpler.

The inscription of Vatsa Bhatti belonging to 473 A.D. contains 44 stanzas or 150 lines and is meant to commemorate the consecration of a temple of the Sun god at Dasapura, the modern Mandasor. A study of this shows that the Kavya form must have reached a high stage of development by the 5th century A.D. The style has close resemblance to that of Kalidasa and so it is inferred that Vatsa Bhatti must have known and used Kalidasa's poems, especially the Meghaduta and the Ritusamhara.

Kalidasa

Date of Kalidasa: It is an irony that practically very little is known about the life and date of the greatest of Sanskrit poets, Kalidasa. Numerous theories have been forwarded about his date based upon certain internal or external evidences; but there are so many contradictory details that many of these theories are

unconvincing. Among these theories, we have what is called the **Korur Theory**. Alberuni (1030 A. D.) records in his works a battle at Korur where one Vikramaditya defeated the Mlecchas, and tradition says that Kalidasa lived in the court of Vikramaditya. The Korur theory combines these two and says that Kalidasa might have lived in the court of this Vikramaditya of Korur fame. This battle took place in 544 A.D., and to commemorate it an era called *Vikrama-Sakhabda* was founded and dated back by 600 years. Hence the Vikrama Era begins from 56 B. C. Kalidasa, according to this theory, ought to have lived about 544 A. D. This theory has been propounded by Fergusson, but it has been disproved by the discovery of the Mandasor Inscription dating as early as 404 A. D. which clearly makes mention of the era in question.

Associating Kalidasa with Vikramaditya, we have a verse preserved by tradition. (Vide Appendix A-7). The verse refers to the fact that Dhanvantari, Kshapanaka, Amarasimha, Sankhu, Vetlabhatta, Ghatakarpara, Kalidasa, Varahamihira and Vararuchi were the nine poetic gems in the court of Vikramaditya. The great Buddhistic shrine at Gaya which was constructed by Amaradeva (presumed to be the same as Amarasimha) is not referred to by Fa-Hian, the Chinese traveller who was in India in 414 A. D. But the later traveller Hiouen-T' Sang (642 A. D.) makes clear reference to this temple. So this temple ought to have been built and consequently Amarasimha must have lived some time between these two dates

century A. D. This is what is popularly known as Dr. Kern's Nine Gems Theory.

We have yet another theory assigning Kalidasa to the 6th century A. D. This is known as the Renaissance Theory of Prof. Max Muller. He holds that the Vedic age and the first period of Sanskrit literature ended with the 1st century B. C. Then, as a result of the frequent foreign invasions and the consequent intellectual lethargy, there was a long interval of literary inactivity. The first five centuries formed a dark age in the history of Sanskrit literature. Then there was a revival of all branches of learning in the reign of Vikramaditya of the 6th century A. D., which was the golden age of court poetry. Kalidasa was the leader of this Renaissance, and so he must have lived in the 6th century A. D.

But we have to reject these theories on the strength of the following details pointing to an earlier date:- Dingnaga and Nichula are, according to some commentators, referred to in a verse of the Megha-sandesa of Kalidasa (Vide Appendix A-8). The fact that Kalidasa was a contemporary of Dingnaga is upheld by the commentator Mallinatha and by an earlier commentator Dakshinavarta. This Dingnaga was a Buddhistic philosopher and logician and is ascertained to have flourished in the 5th century A. D. Dingnaga is the author of *Pramana Samuccaya*,

a work on Logic from the Buddhistic standpoint. The author of *Udyota* and several other Hindu logicians, in their works, quote Dingnaga and refute him. This author of *Udyota* is quoted by Subandhu, author of *Vasavadatta*. On the strength of the approximate date of *Udyotakara* which is about the 6th century A.D., we believe that Dingnaga must have lived in the 5th century A.D., and so also Kalidasa, as he was his contemporary.

There is a verse in the *Raghuvamsha* (Vide Appendix A-9) in which some critics see an allusion to the theory of eclipse propounded by Aryabhatta who is known to have lived in 499 A.D. According to this, Kalidasa could not have lived earlier than the close of the 5th century A.D. But this view is untenable as the interpretation of the given verse is not convincing and as this idea of the eclipse was already known to India and is found in the work called *Romaka Siddhanta* of about 400 A.D., which is said to have been written under Greek influence.

There are other theories built on very slender or fictitious grounds. The author of the work called *Bhoja Charita* makes Kalidasa a court-poet of King Bhoja of Dhara. This theory is absurd on the face of it, firstly because it brings Kalidasa down to the 11th century A.D., a date too improbable in the light of the earlier references to the poet, and secondly because it groups under the patronage of the same king, authors of avowedly different dates like Kalidasa, Bhavabhuti and Dandin.

those of the west is the one which assigns Kalidasa to the first century B.C. This theory has been gaining more ground than the other ones in recent years. The Patron of Kalidasa is identified with king Vikramaditya in whose commemoration the famous Vikrama Era was started in 56 B C., since he is the king who actually bore that name whereas many other kings of later ages only bore the name as a title. The arguments for dismissing the name of Vikrama of 1st century B. C. as a purely legendary figure are not convincing. The prescription of death penalty for the crime of theft and the denial of the right of inheriting the husband's property to the widow, which are found in the Sakuntala certainly point to an age before the beginning of the Christian era, when the Smritis supporting those customs were in vogue. The similarity in style and thought between Asvaghosha, who is a Buddhist and who is a philosopher in the main and a poet by the way, and Kalidasa who is solely a poet and dramatist of established reputation can only lead to the conclusion that Asvaghosha followed Kalidasa as his model and not vice-versa.

Still others have assigned Kalidasa to the 2nd century B.C. and have argued that Kalidasa must have been a contemporary of King Agnimitra of the Sunga dynasty, whom the poet has immortalized in his play 'Malavikagnimitra'; for, the unusual reference to

Agnimitra in the Bharatavakya and the introduction of the not very relevant reference to Pushyamitra's horse sacrifice in the play cannot be otherwise accounted for. As the story of the Raghuvamsa ends with Agnivarna, some critics consider Kalidasa to have been his contemporary and have accordingly assigned him to the 8th century B. C.

The theory that has been generally accepted by the western scholars of research is the one that considers Kalidasa to have lived in the glorious age of the Imperial Guptas. The protagonists of this theory hold that since Kalidasa bears clear marks of the influence of Asvaghosha, a contemporary of King Kanishka of the 1st century A.D., and since he clearly refers to Bhasa, the dramatist as his predecessor, the theories that assign Kalidasa to an age earlier than the 3rd century A.D., have to be discarded. Similarly since the Aihole Inscription of 634 A.D., and the great poet Bana of the 7th century A.D. make unmistakable reference to Kalidasa, all theories which assign him to a period later than the 6th century A.D. have to be rejected. The Inscriptions of Vatsa Bhatti belonging to 473 A.D. reveal clear knowledge of the works of Kalidasa. Hence the date of Kalidasa could not be later than the 5th century A.D.

Raghu's path of victory as described in the Raghuvamsa has great resemblance to the military campaign of Skandagupta who defeated the Huns. Raghu also is said to have defeated the Huns (*Hunas*). Dr. Phatak identifies Raghu's path with that of Skandagupta who

dynasty. Dr. H. H. P. places him in the age of Chandragupta II of Ujjain who ruled up to 413 A. D. and bore the title of Vikramaditya. In support of this theory it is said that the play called *Vikramorvasiya* was so named in honour of the patron who was known as Vikrama. Samudragupta, the father of Chandragupta, his patron, was the last king to perform the horse sacrifice, and this sacrifice performed after a very long interval must have been a memorable incident, fresh in the minds of the people even in the reign of his patron. This alone can account for Kalidasa's emphasis on the not very relevant horse-sacrifice in *Malavikagnimitra*. Kumarasambhava was so named in order to commemorate the birth of Prince Kumargupta. It was Chandragupta II that brought Ujjain under the Gupta rule and this accounts for the poet's rapturous reference to this city in his poems. So the period of the poet must be somewhere about the beginning of the 5th century A.D., for Chandragupta II of Ujjain ruled from 380 to 413 A.D.

The Works of Kalidasa: Two lyric poems *Ritusamhara* and *Meghaduta*, two Mahakavyas *Kumarsambhava* and *Raghuvamsha* and three plays *Malavikagnimitra*, *Vikramorvasiya* and *Abhijnana Sakuntala*, are the authentic works of Kalidasa. There are several others which are spuriously attributed to him e. g., poems like *Setu kavya*, *Kavi Rakshasiya*, *Nalodaya*, and stray compositions like *Navaratnamala*, *Syamala*

Dandaka, a book on prosody called *Srutabodha*, a work on astronomy, *Jyotirvidabharana*, and other sundry works. It needs no deep study to discard these, on grounds of style and subject matter, as not belonging to Kalidasa or at least to that Kalidasa who is the famous author of *Sakuntala*.

Kumarasambhava : The *Kumarasambhava* is a Mahakavya which describes the birth of the War-god, Skanda, and the precedents that led to it. The poem exists at present in 17 cantos; but only the first eight cantos are recognised as genuine. The rest of the poem, as the style shows, is decidedly post-Kalidasan. It is a problem why Kalidasa left it incomplete. As we have it, in the first eight cantos, the birth of Kumara has not been described as the title professes. It stops with the description of the wedding and the joy of the divine couple and therefore indicates the youthful jollity of the poet. The profusion of words over thought, the oversensuous nature of the ideas and the light jollity of youth found in the poem are clearly against the theory that *Kumarasambhava* was the last of the poet's works. So we have to find other explanations for the incompleteness of the poem. In all probability the excessive sensuousness of the poems almost verging on sensuality, which is associated with the divine couple ought to have won the disapproval of the sober orthodox critics of the time. This view is justified by the unfavourable criticism about the poem found in *Dhvanyaloka* and *Kavyaprakasa*. Therefore, the poem might have been stopped abruptly, the

poet in the meanwhile having resolved to explore other fields. A successor, probably observing the inconsistency between the title and the contents of the poem, might have continued it.

The importance of the poem lies in the aesthetic value of the descriptions and in the depth of sensuous emotion. In its style, it shows a clear advance over the *Ritusamhara*. The description of the Himalayas with which the poem opens and the account of the beauties of the forest on the advent of spring are fine specimens of the poet's art and the second canto in which the gods praise Brahma is full of philosophical truths. While Kumarasambhava deserves a certain amount of disapproval for its oversensuous tendency, it also deserves a great applause for the richness of creative fancy and the vivid descriptions found in it.

Raghuvamsa: The Raghuvamsa is evidently the last and the most perfect of Kalidasa's poems. He describes in 19 cantos the glories of the kings of the solar race. It is not a continuous account of all the kings of the race, but the poet confines himself to some kings, Dilipa, Raghu, Aja, Dasaratha, Rama and some of his successors. After a general account of the great traits of the kings of the solar race, he introduces the childless king Dilipa who goes to the hermitage of Vasishta, his preceptor, to propitiate the hermit's cow Nandini as a compensation for the insult offered to Kamadhenu by him. Raghu is born as the reward. The birth of Raghu, his boyhood and his kingship are next elaborately described. The

military expedition of Raghu described in canto IV is important as it helps us to understand the geographical and historical situation of the country in those times. Raghu's son is Aja. The account of the *Swayamvara* of Indumati, Aja's winning her and the severe battle that ensues between Aja and the disappointed lovers are given vividly in cantos VI and VII. Later we hear of the deep pathos of Aja's lamentation over the death of his beloved Indumati. *Aja vilapa* has become a classic of its kind. This is in a way a complement to *Rati vilapa* in the *Kumara-sambhava*. Aja's son is Dasaratha and the story of his hunt resulting in a tragic blunder is told in canto IX. Then follows a beautiful devotional hymn addressed to Vishnu by the gods oppressed by Ravana, wherein the poet gives evidence of his philosophical lore. Canto XI speaks of Rama's story up to his marriage. Cantos XII, XIII and XIV carry on the story of Ramayana. In Canto XV we have the story of Uttara Ramayana and then follow brief accounts of some of the successors of Rama. Canto XIX ends abruptly with the death of the voluptuous Agnivarna. The style of Raghuvamsa is terse and dignified. The extreme condensation and the faultless nature of the expression prove this to be the maturest work of the poet. In the last few cantos a clear decline in the poetic powers is visible. Evidently by that time Kalidasa has grown too old to evince any more poetical enthusiasm. In the Raghuvamsa the narrative moves on with fair rapidity, not being too much

impeded by long descriptions. The poem abounds in apt and striking similes and has been rightly considered to be the best Mahakavya in Sanskrit.

Sanskrit epic poetry has reached its highest perfection in the works of Kalidasa and so he represents the fullest development of that form of composition. His style is easy, spontaneous and particularly devoid of long compounds which are so characteristic of later Sanskrit writers like Bana.

According to the technical phraseology of Sanskrit rhetoricians, the style of Kalidasa is to be classed as *Vaidarbhi*. Fundamentally, Kalidasa prefers delicate suggestion to elaborate expression; and herein consists the greatest value of his style. No doubt his poems abound in rhetorical devices and figures of speech, but they are never so artificial as to overwhelm the thought. Simile is decidedly his trump-card. He rightly deserves the encomium. "*Upama Kalidasa*". His imagery which is rich and varied, and his mastery in handling the elementary emotions of man particularly love, have decidedly secured for him such a place in Indian Literature which Shakespeare occupies in English Literature.

After the age of Kalidasa, the Sanskrit epic poetry reveals clear tendencies of decline and artificiality. The subject matter of the latter Kavyas are derived from either of the two great *Itihasas* but are mixed up with a great deal of erotic, lyric and didactic matter. "The poems become increasingly artificial and the

story is regarded as merely the means of display for elaborate conceits and word-play until nothing remains in the last stage except bombast and verbal jugglery."

Bhartrumenta, more popularly known as **Menta** was a poet who lived in the court of king **Matrugupta** of **Kashmir** who ruled about 430 A. D. His poem *Hayagrivavadha* is lost to us; but quotations from it are available in works of **Alankara**, **Mankha** and **Rajasekhara** have mentioned **Menta** with reverence in their works.

Pravarasena

Setubandha or the 'Building of the Bridge' is a poem in the **Maharashtri** type of **Prakrit**. Popular opinion assigns it to a king called **Pravarasena**. Some ascribe it to **Kalidasa** himself while some others are of opinion that the author was a contemporary of **Kalidasa**. But the profusion of compounds and the artificial style of the poem are against the conclusion of such an early date. The author of this poem elicits a glowing tribute from both **Dandin** and **Bana** and this proves that, though later than **Kalidasa**, the poem cannot be far removed from his date. It will be fairly correct to assign it to the 6th century A. D.

The poem, also called **Setu Kavya** or **Ravanavadha**, deals with the building of *Setu*, the famous bridge to **Lanka**, by the monkeys. This is the central theme, though much of the story of **Ramayana** is included in the poem. It is said to have been written to commemorate the building of a bridge of boats across the

river Vitasta or Jhelum by the king Pravarasena. The king is known to have been both a patron of literature and a poet himself. It is therefore, quite likely that Pravarasena was himself the author of Setubandha.

Bharavi

The next important poet of whom we know after Kalidasa is Bharavi. He is mentioned as a famous poet along with Kalidasa in the Aihole Inscription of 634 A.D. From the point of view of style and thought Bharavi bears clear marks of Kalidasa's influence and, in turn, leaves his own influence on Magha. But Bana omits to mention Bharavi in his works though he mentions many other predecessors. Therefore Bharavi could not have been, in the days of Bana, so old as to possess a well tested and well established reputation. In other words, Bharavi could have preceded Bana only by a few years. He can, therefore, be placed somewhere about the close of the 6th century A. D. His only work that we have is called *Kirartarjuniya*, an epic poem in 18 cantos. It borrows its plot from the Vana Parva of Mahabharata. In brief, the story is this:— A spy that has been deputed to Hastinapura returns and reports to Yudhisthira the prosperity of his foe, Duryodhana. The brothers of Yudhisthira and Draupadi, urge on an immediate war. Soon Vyasa appears on the scene, and advises Arjuna to perform a penance to win divine weapons from Siva. A vivid description of the Himalayas follows. Arjuna goes for penance. In succeeding cantos the attempts of the gods to break his penance with the help of the divine

nymphs and the futility of those attempts are described. Lastly Indra himself tries to dissuade him but in vain. In the end Lord Siva in the form of a hunter appears following a wild boar which Arjuna shoots. A fierce fight ensues between the mortal and the immortal warriors on this issue. In the end Siva, full of admiration for Arjuna's valour, reveals his true form and rewards Arjuna with the required divine weapon.

Bharavi's description has great power and vigour though it often lacks the delicacy of Kalidasa's thoughts. His greatness consists in the masterly handling of the heroic sentiment. The calm dignity, the force, and the stateliness of his style are particularly appropriate for the emotion of heroism. The poem is full of thought-provoking axioms, and it is this characteristic that has always attracted the readers. If Kalidasa's style can be summed up in the words 'delicate and graceful', Bharavi's style can be summed up as 'stately and dignified'. There are some grave defects in his style from which Kalidasa is free. Bharavi resorts to frequent verbal feats which are suggestive more of the mechanical mastery of the lexicon than of aesthetic taste. Mannerisms are very frequent. The repetition of the past perfect and Impersonal forms and such verbal exercises abound particularly in the 15th canto where there are some verses which give one sense if read forward as usual and another sense if read backwards. There are again verses comprising only two or three letters. (Vide Appendix A-10 & 11). Abstruse forms of grammar are

also found in plenty. In this respect, Bharavi has set a bad example for his successors. We might say that with Bharavi artificiality sets in. This artificiality, so much developed during successive ages, accounts for the decline of the Sanskrit epic. Bharavi represents the first step in the decline of the Sanskrit court poetry.

Bhatti

The pedantry of Bharavi, especially his feats of grammar, are perfected to a tiresome extent in Bhatti's *Ravanavadha* which is generally known as *Bhattikavya*. It is a poem in 22 cantos dealing with the story of the Ramayana. There are passages of poetic interest, no doubt, yet the distinct purpose of the author is not only aesthetic but also to illustrate the rules of grammar and rhetoric. We can say that it is more a manual of grammar and rhetoric in illustration than a poem with an artistic aim. He attempts to combine the pleasure of poetry with the instruction of grammatical learning. Since this poem helps the student to acquire a sound knowledge of grammar and language, it has always been studied as an advanced text book in Kavya and for the same reason his work has been included as one of the five great Kavyas. The author calls himself a contemporary of King Sridharasena. Four kings bearing that name are known, the last of whom died in 641 A. D. The artificiality of the poem gives us sufficient ground to put him in the age of the last Sridharasena, thus assigning

Bhatti to the middle of the 7th century A. D. Some critics have tried to identify the poet Bhatti with Vatsa Bhatti. But the very fact that Bhatti is a veteran in grammar whereas Vatsa Bhatti commits grammatical slips in some of his verses goes against such identification. Others identify him with Bhartrihari, but without sufficient grounds.

Kumaradasa

Kumaradasa is a supposed king of Ceylon who has left a poem called Janakiharana. As the title suggests, it deals with the story of Ramayana. The free use of certain grammatical forms in the book shows that he knew the Kasika Vritti, a work on grammar written about 650 A. D. and so it is likely that he belongs to the latter part of the 7th century A. D. A king called Kumaradasa ruled in Ceylon from 517—526 A. D, but the author of this poem could not be identical with that King of Ceylon. Some traditions about Kalidasa have connected the poet Kalidasa with Kumaradasa, King of Ceylon. But there is no historical evidence for it. The style of Kumaradasa is simple and he tries to reproduce the style of Kalidasa. But for his love of abundant alliteration, he can be said to have completely succeeded in his imitation of Kalidasa. His poem consists of 20 cantos and the story differs in very few details from the Ramayana. The style, the poetic embellishments and other artistic qualities of this poem have won for Kumaradasa an eulogy from Rajasekara. (Vide App. A-12)

Magha

The next important name in the field of Sanskrit epic is that of Magha. His date can be guessed from a reference in his poem, *Sisupalavadha*, to *Nagananda*, a play by Sri Harsha. This makes it clear that Magha was posterior to Harsha of Thanesar, the patron of Bana (606—648 A. D.). Further a reference to a relative of Magha is found in an inscription dated 700 A. D. On these grounds Magha is placed about the beginning of the 8th century A. D. Macdonell's suggestion of the 9th century A. D. is certainly too improbable and has been discarded by later critics. Magha's work, *Sisupalavadha*, is an epic in 20 cantos based on a portion of the *Mahabharata*. In the sacrifice of *Rajasuya* which *Yudhisthira* performs after his victory over *Jarasandha*, the first offering of honour which must be shown for the greatest personage in the assembly is shown to Sri Krishna at the advice of *Bhishma* and other elders. *Sisupala* is already a foe of Krishna, and being himself an aspirant to that honour, protests against that procedure and rebukes both Krishna and *Bhishma*. A fight ensues in which Krishna slays *Sisupala*, king of *Chedi*. There are a few changes effected from the original plot. The *Sisupalavadha* is a work of very great poetical merit. Traditionally Magha has been admired for the combination in his work of the similes of *Kalidasa*, the depth of thought of *Bharavi*, and the delicacy of expression of *Dandin*. (Vide Appendix A-13). There is another traditional criticism which says that the glory of *Bharavi* was bedimmed by Magha: (Vide Appendix A-14). Therefore

Sisupalavadha has always been a very popular poem, Magha's poetic merit is very great and his vocabulary is copious. His command of the Alankaras is wonderful and he has handled 41 different metres with great skill. Though he possesses the vigour and conciseness of Bharavi's style, his occasional luxuriance of expression and the leisurely manner of his treatment of the subject have a rare beauty of their own. There is a certain stateliness in his rhythm, though he lacks the delicate melody of Kalidasa's verses. The faults of artificiality found in the later Kavyas find a place in Magha also. His occasional twisting of the language and his attempt at several extremely fantastic metrical devices are repulsive to the modern reader. He sometimes shows also the influence of Bhatti by reviving antiquated grammatical forms. After him we have a few less important names in the field of Kavyas.

Vakpati

A Prakrit poem, Gaudavaha has been left by a poet Vakpati belonging to 8th century A.D. This poem is partly historical in theme as it deals with the defeat of a Gauda Prince, by King Yasovarman of Kanauj who was the patron of the poet. His ideas are mostly conventional and lack originality. His long compounds reveal an artificiality of taste and on the whole the literary worth of the poem is not very great. The poet clearly admits his indebtedness to Bhavabhuti.

Harichandra

Harichandra, a poet belonging to the cult of Digambara Jains, has composed a poem called

... of the 10th century A.D., alludes to him in his play called *Karpuramanjari*, he may be assigned to the 9th century A. D.

Khappanabhyudaya

The poem named Khappanabhyudaya in 20 cantos was composed in the latter half of the 9th century A.D. by Sivasvamin, a Buddhist, who was the court poet of King Avantivarman of Kashmir. The story is based on a legend from the *Avadana Sataka*. Khappana, a king of the Dakshinapatha attacks Prasenajit, the Buddhist ruler of Sravasti, and is himself converted to Buddhism. The author reveals a clear knowledge of the Nagananda of Sri Harsha.

Ratnakara

A Kashmirian Poet, Rajanaka Ratnakara Vagiswara belonging to about 880 A.D., is known for his huge poem, *Haravijaya* in 48 cantos. The theme of *Haravijaya* is the slaying of the demon Andhaka who is Siva's own off-spring. Born of Siva, still he is the foe of the gods and, acquiring supernatural powers by penance, he tyrannises over gods and usurps the throne of the three worlds. The Lords of the seasons headed by the Spring appeal for protection to Siva. After the debate among the councillors of Siva wherein rules of politics are elaborately discussed, an envoy is sent to the demon to bid him retire from the usurped kingdoms. A long description of the sports of Siva's

retinue follows. The messenger returns in course of time with a negative reply. In the end a battle ensues in which the demon is killed. The poem is unnecessarily and exceedingly elaborate and has absolutely no sense of proportion. The fact that three cantos are devoted to the description of the amorous sports of Siva's retinue, four cantos for describing the gathering of the armies and seven cantos for narrating the conversation of Siva's messenger with the demon is a clear proof of the author's lack of aesthetic sense. The style is very harsh and overworked. It imitates all the mechanical devices of the lesser artists of the preceding generations. In short the poem has very little artistic and poetic value and is remembered only as a literary relic representing the advanced stage in the decline of the Sanskrit Epic.

Nalodaya

Nalodaya, the Rise of Nala describes in four cantos the restoration of Nala to his kingdom after his loss of everything by gambling. This is one of the several poems wrongly attributed to Kalidasa. The highly artificial style of the author precludes the possibility of such an authorship and such an early date. The author's chief aim is to show off his skill in the handling of the difficult metres, the ample use of *Yamaka* and the elaborate tricks of style of the later day writers. The second and the longest of the four cantos describes the wedded joys of Nala and Damayanti in highly conventional language and attempts to turn *Kamasutra* into poetry. It is generally

considered to have been written by one Vasudeva, a poet of Kerala, whose identity and age have not yet been established beyond dispute. Yudhishtiravijaya, a Mahakavya in eight *asvasas*, describing the story of Yudhishtira upto his victory and coronation, Rakshasakavya, a short poem in twenty stanzas, Tripuradahana, a poem narrating Siva's victory over the demon Tripura and several other works are attributed to this poet, although some critics defferentiate the author of Yudhishtiravijaya from the author of Nalodaya and assign him to the 12 century A. D. One of the commentators of Nalodaya has expressly mentioned the name of the author as Vasudeva, son of Ravi. From the poet's own references to king Kulasekhara and king Rama in his poems, it is considered probable that Vasudeva lived in Kerala in the 9th century A. D. Another commentator has named Ravideva or Ravidasa, son of Narayana, as the author of Nalodaya, but the identity of Ravideva has not yet been traced.

Halyaudha

Following the example of Bhatti in composing a Kavya illustrating the rules of grammar, Halayudha has written a poem known as Kavirahasya in which he extols his patron, king Krishna. The author has so named his poem revealing his intention to make his work a guide to the poets in attaining perfection in expression. The hero of the poem, Krishna, has been identified with the third king of that name in the Rashtrakuta dynasty who ruled from 940 A. D. The

poet is therefore to be assigned to the later half of the 10th century A. D.

Kshemendra

Kshemendra of Kashmir is the author of the *Ramayanamanjari*, the *Bharatamanjari*, and the *Dasavataracharita*, three long poems which narrate the respective epic stories conveyed by their titles. His mastery of the contents of the Puranas and Itihasas amply justifies his title of *Vyasadasa*. He has also written a fourth work of his kind, *Brihadkathamanjari*, which is a brief Sanskrit rendering of *Gunadhya's Brihadkatha* which is said to have been composed in the *Paisachi* dialect. Kshemendra has contributed profusely to all branches of Sanskrit literature like epic, lyric, didactic and Alankara. He was a disciple of *Abhinava Gupta* and he lived in the court of king Ananta of Kashmir who ruled from 1029 to 1064 A. D. Although there is not much of artistic originality in his poems, Kshemendra's skill in abridging and the versatility of his genius deserve a fair appreciation.

Mankha

Comparatively more important is the *Srikantacharita* of Mankha belonging to about 1135 A. D. It deals in 25 cantos with the victory of Siva over the demon called Tripura. The poem is intolerably elaborate. Almost the whole of canto I is devoted to prayers and benedictions; and dreary descriptions on the hackneyed line choke the narrative in every canto.

In the 25th canto we have an account of the several persons in the durbar of the poet's brother Alankar who was a minister of king Jayasimha (1129-50 A. D. But for the hisiorical value of this part of the poem it is as dull and artificial as it is long-winded.

About 1150 A. D. Vagbhata, who has made valuable contributions to the Alankara literature wrote his poem *Neminirvana* dealing with the story of Neminatha, a Jain saint who has been eulogized by several Jain writers in their works.

Kaviraja

The use of puns and play on words already initiated by Magha and Bharavi grew more and more exaggerated until they culminated in a special class of poems in the epic style meant to narrate two different stories simultaneously. A *tour de force* of this kind is certainly the peculiar possession of Sanskrit literature and it may be noted that there are many works of this type. Kaviraja was an expert in that line. He composed his *Raghava Pandaviya* which, as the title suggests, deals with the story of Rama and that of the Pandava princes. Every verse is interpreted in two ways sometimes by puns or by different dissections of the euphonic combinations. The author's capacity in handling this difficult method has been applauded by critics. (Vide Appendix A-15).

Though with its artificial device the poem has been legitimately neglected, there are indications enough in the work of the poet's artistic capabilities.

Kaviraja is also the author of a simpler and finer poem in 10 cantos called *Parijataharana* in which he narrates the story of the bringing down to earth of the divine *Parijata* tree by Krishna to placate Satyabhama. He is ranked with *Subandhu* and *Bana* in the matter of using the artistic mode of expression called *Vakrokti* (Vide Appendix A-16). Macdonell takes him to have flourished probably about 800 A.D.; but Keith with greater justification assigns him to about 1190 A.D. and takes him to have been patronized by Kadamba Kamadeva (1182—1197).

Dhananjaya a Jain writer who wrote probably between 1123 and 1140 has also left a work of the same name, *Raghava Pandaviya* with an alternative title 'Dvisandhana Kavya'. In subject matter, in the double purpose and in the methods adopted to convey the two narratives simultaneously, it is almost identical with the work of Kaviraja.

Haradatta Suri of unknown date has performed the same literary feat with the stories of Rama and Nala in his work called *Raghava Naishadhiya*. This difficult literary feat of co-lateral narration of several episodes has been attempted by several poets.

Sri Harsha

An important name in the epic of the later ages is that of Sri Harsha, the author of *Naishadhiya Charita*. This Sri Harsha is different from the one who was the patron of Bana and the author of *Nagananda* and other plays. Sri Harsha of Naishadha belongs to the

later part of the 12th century A.D. and was a poet under king Jayachandra of Kanouj. The work is included as one of the five great epics, *Pancha Mahakavyas*. From the point of view of art, Sri Harsha has spoiled the delicate beauty of the romantic story of Nala and Damayanti by his elaborate rhetorical devices and his tasteless fancies. The poem is important as it represents the Sanskrit epic in the last stages of its decline both in the lack of aesthetic perfection and in the absence of artistic originality.

The poem consists of 22 cantos as we have it at present and takes us only up to the wedding and the conjugal life of Nala. Evidently this is incomplete. It is popularly believed that he wrote 60 cantos on the whole completing the story. But the last few verses of the 22nd cantos are in the form of an apologia and this prevents our believing that he wrote anything more than these 22 cantos. At the end of each canto there is one verse in which the poet mentions about his own parentage and his other works, the most important among them being *Khandana Khandakhadya* (The sweets of Refutation), a philosophical work. Hira and Mamalla Devi were his parents. His vast vocabulary is inclusive of the most obscure Sanskrit words. His mastery of the metrical skill is superb. But these merits are misused and so much overwrought as to tire out the reader. Puns and conceits abound everywhere; his imagery is extremely overdone, and one has to work hard before he can get at the grain of beauty in it. As a consequence he has always been

considered as the most difficult writer. This view is very neatly expressed in the old criticism "*Naishadham Vidvadaushadham*". It is so very difficult to master Naishadha as it is to masticate a pill of medicine, though in the end the labour in both cases is productive of much good. A deep study of the poem is conducive to sound scholarship. Though his style is tough, his powers of observation and description of nature are decidedly of a very high order and would have been of immense poetical value if they had been combined with a more delicate and judicious aesthetic sense.

After Naishadha we have practically very little of Kavya literature worth the name. Thus it can be said that the history of the Sanskrit epic, as far as we have got it now, is the story of its decline; for the pre-Kalidasan stage of Kavya which represents the growth of it has not been preserved for us and we begin the study of Sanskrit Literature with Kalidasa who represents the high watermark of the Sanskrit Epic. We are sure that the maturity and splendour of Kalidasa's work must decidedly be the result of long development. After Kalidasa, artificiality of thought and language sets in gradually, culminating in the Naishadha and thus we find that the history of the Epic, in fact, is "one of decline in taste and growing artificiality of form".

Although it may be said generally that Sri Harsha of Naishadha is the last great poet of the Classical age, it will be far from correct to think that the stream

of Sanskrit poetry has become quite dry after the 12th century A. D. Considerable contributions of more or less eminence have been made by poets of later ages to the various branches of Sanskrit literature; but the striking feature about this period is that most of the poets and dramatists hail from the South and that the simple and graceful style of the age of Kalidasa reappears after long centuries of belaboured and complex verbal feats. A few of the major works of this period may be noticed here.

In the 13th century A. D., the poet Krishnananda of Puri wrote the *Sahridayananda*, a poem in 15 cantos dealing with the whole story of Nala. Its simple and elegant style is consistent with the graceful romance of the story. Since *Visvanatha* of the 14th century refers to him in his *Sahityadarpana*, he must be placed in the 13th century.

Venkatanatha

Venkatanatha, more popularly known as *Vedanta-Desika* (1268–1376 A. D.), a great poet and philosopher was a native of Kanchi. During a long life of ceaseless literary and spiritual activity, he has written about 120 works on philosophy and numerous other branches of knowledge, including all forms of literature, *Kavya*, drama, lyric, hymns and didactic verses. His *Yadava-bhyudaya* is a Mahakavya in 24 cantos dealing with the story of Krishna in easy and elegant style. The poem has been commented upon by the great philosopher-poet *Appayya Dikshita* of the 17th century. Another

ork of his is the Padukasahasra, poem of
nd verses said to have been composed mira-
ver -night describing the glory of the sandals
ganatha, the presiding deity of Srirangam.
ysical drama called *Sankalpasuryodaya*, a
n called *Hamasa sandesa*, a didactic poem
hashitaneevi, and numerous stotras including
rakrit dialect are among his other works
ry character.

ya, who is more commonly known by his
anatha conferred on him by his patron king
dra of Warrangal (1294—1325 A. D.). is
o be the author of many poems. One of his
orks is the *Balabharata*, a Mahakavya in
describing the episodes of the Mahabharata
od and pleasing style. He perpetuated the
of his patron by means of his standard work
ara called *Prataparudrayasobhushana*.

he 15th century Sukumara kavi a poet belong-
Malabar, wrote *Krishnavilasakavya* in 4 cantos
g the exploits of Krishna. On account of its
y and sweetness of diction, the poem is very
read and enjoyed in Malabar.

out 1600 A. D. the poet Chidambara, who was
ed by king Venkata I (1586—1614 A. D.) of
agar, wrote a *Trisandhana* kavya, a poem with
e *entendre* called *Ragava Yadava Pandaviya*
stos narrating at the same time the stories of
ana, Mahabharata and Bhagavata.

Rajachudamani Dikshita of the 17th century who was patronised by the king Raghunatha of Tanjore is the author of many books on diverse topics. In simple Sanskrit he has described the episode of the wedding of Krishna with Rukmini in his *Rukminikalyana kavya* containing ten cantos. To the same century belongs **Chakra kavi**, the court poet of Tirumala Nayak of Madura. His poem is called *Janakiparinayam* and it deals with the topic of the wedding of Sita in 8 cantos,

Nilakanta Dikshita

The most outstanding poet of the 17th century is **Nilakanta Dikshita**, who was born in the line of the famous Appayya Dikshita. With a versatile genius and a life of intense literary activity similar to that of Vedanta Desika, Nilakanta Dikshita has contributed substantially to all branches of Sanskrit literature. His *Sivalilarnava* is an exquisite poem in simple Sanskrit which describes in 22 cantos the sixty four *lilas* or sportive exploits which were performed by Lord Siva who with the name of Halasyanatha, is the presiding deity of Madura. He has also sung in a poem of 8 cantos called *Gangavatarana* the story of the descent to the earth of the celestial river Ganga.

Ramabhadra Dikshita wrote the story of the great grammarian Patanjali in his *Patanjalicharita*, a poem in 8 cantos. He belongs to the close of the 17th and early 18th century and was patronized by king Sahaji of Tanjore (1684—1711 A. D.)

Many other poems like Parimala's *Navasahasanka charita*, Bilhana's *Vikramāṅkadevacharita*, Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* and Hemachandra's *Dvyasrayakavya* are all Mahakavyas, according to the canons of classification adopted by Sanskrit rhetoricians; but as they are based on historical themes, they are dealt with in the chapter on Historical Kavyas.

CHAPTER IV

Prose Romance (Gadya Kavya)

The Gadya Kavya is classified as major branch of literature by Sanskrit rhetoricians and yet there is a great paucity of prose in Sanskrit in the classical age. In the earlier ages, however, prose seems to have been more freely handled. In the Vedic literature several passages in the Brahmanas and the Upanishads and a vast portion of the Yajurveda are in prose. In the Puranas there are occasional passages and sometimes whole narratives in prose interspersed here and there. In the succeeding ages, prose was used as the medium of commentary on works of philosophy and grammar. The *Mahabhashya* of Patanjali, the classical commentary on the Sutas of Panini, is written in prose. The Bhashyas or commentaries on the Vedānta Sutas of Badarayana by the founders and the exponents of the several schools of philosophy like Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva are all in prose. Even in recent ages, the commentators have written their gloss on the standard works in prose form. The earliest works in prose, written purely with a literary purpose,